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Allegories of Reading: *Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* by Paul de Man. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979. Pp. xi + 305. $19.50.

Allegories of Reading, Paul de Man's latest book, is in many ways related to his earlier collection of essays, *Blindness and Insight*. In the earlier work, de Man showed how the principle underlying the work of several important critics was capable of illuminating texts precisely because the critic was unaware of a contradiction at the heart of the insight. De Man argued, for example, that Georg Lukacs' itinerary in the *Theory of the Novel* sought to abolish the concept of organicity from the novel while at the same time reinstating an organic conception through the mode of temporality which was used to elaborate the supposedly non-organic theory. The insight which appears to abolish the concept, and the insight that generates the brilliant readings of various novels, thus only displaces the concept, leading to an inherent contradiction in the reading.

Allegories of Reading is not based on thematic or critical principles, as *Blindness and Insight* was, but instead it moves into a broader arena of contradiction as de Man investigates the relationship between grammar, the syntactic, metonymic placement of signifiers in a chain, and rhetoric, the tropes that are placed within the syntactic structure. The book begins by pointing out that most of the recent work done in this area by writers like Todorov, Barthes and Genette has assumed from the very beginning that rhetoric is only a part of grammar and hence consonant with its rules. And since rhetoric is seen only as a part of the grammar, the assumption of these writers is that once the rules for the grammar have been developed, rhetoric will be accounted for as well. For de Man, however, this consonance between rhetoric and grammar needs to be called into question, and the result of such questioning is an elaboration of the irony of understanding which places rhetoric and grammar at odds much in the same way that the insight of critics seemed to be contradicted by a blindness in de Man's earliest essays. His deconstructive readings demonstrate that grammar and rhetoric undermine each other rather than leading to understanding.

In using the terms "irony" and "deconstruction," de Man clearly places his work within the post-structuralist tradition, but his deconstructions bear the stamp of his own lucid writing. This is a text which continually undoes the relationship between grammar and trope, which continually demonstrates that the grammatical level is always deconstructed by the tropological level, leading finally to the view that any text contradicts its own premises and at the same time needs those premises to contradict itself and to reveal the contradiction. Through careful readings of Proust, Rilke, Nietzsche, and especially

Rousseau, to whom the entire second half of the book is devoted, de Man elaborates his view that "A literary text simultaneously asserts and denies the authority of its own rhetorical mode..." (17), regardless of whether one attempts to ground the rhetoric in the grammar or the grammar in the rhetoric.

In one sense, the work of *Allegories of Reading* is devoted to pursuing the lack of a ground within texts, a major theme of any deconstruction. Self, author, grammar, rhetoric and so on are each seen to be concepts which continually displace rather than ground a given reading of a text. The result of such readings is that all texts become fundamentally unreadable, hopelessly locked into an uncontrolled irony whose displacements it is impossible to stop. In another sense, though, de Man is also attempting to resolve some of the gaps and contradictions in previous readings of figures like Nietzsche and Rousseau. In Nietzsche's case, this is done through readings which find a contradiction in his work between performative language and representational language, a contradiction that does not appear only in the later work but which is present from the very beginning of Nietzsche's career. The reading then provides an important connection between early work like *The Birth of Tragedy* and later texts like *On the Genealogy of Morals*. The readings of Rousseau seek a deconstruction that accounts for the various philosophical, literary and autobiographical texts which unite them in their contradiction. Thus, each "essay" in the text offers new approaches to the figures under consideration and at the same time calls into question the readability of such work, and both are carefully and brilliantly evoked.

A brief glance at the commentary on Rousseau will indicate the position de Man outlines. The problem is first located in the *Discourse on the Origins and the Foundations of Inequality among Men*, a text that is problematic because it seems to blend both fiction and history in an inconsistent manner, leaving the reader unsure of its status—half seems devoted to a denominative history, half to a tropological fiction about human perfectability. The problem here is that it becomes "impossible to say whether denomination is literal or figural: from the moment there is denomination, the conceptual metaphor of entity as difference is implied, and whenever there is metaphor, the literal denomination of a particular entity is inevitable..." (148). And since the denomination, beginning with "man," is ultimately to lead to a political model as well, one must conclude that Rousseau's idea of the "political destiny of man is structured like and derived from a linguistic model that exists independently of nature and independently of the subject..." (156). Instead of basing his political model on the state of nature, then, Rousseau actually bases it on a linguistic model, and the negative aspects of social institutions thus parallel the confusion between literal and metaphorical language that is at the center of any linguistic system: the "circular, self-destructive pattern of all civil institutions mirrors the self-destructive epistemology of conceptual language when it demonstrates its inability to keep literal reference and figural connotation apart" (158). De Man's argument is more complex and detailed than this, but the basic point is simply that the political and the linguistic in Rousseau are both based on the inability properly to separate the literal from the metaphorical, leading to abuse within both networks.

The *Second Discourse*, then, reveals the deconstructive principle inherent in all cognitive discourse: "it always has to be about an entity such as 'man' in which the noun is a conceptual metaphor that replaces a delusive play between identity and difference" (160). De Man then proceeds to discuss other works of Rousseau and to demonstrate how this principle undoes the self/other polarity and those other dichotomies through which we try to order and ground our world. With respect to reading itself, we find that "The paradigm for all texts consists of a figure (or a system of figures) and its deconstruction. But since this model cannot be closed off by a final reading, it engenders, in its turn, a supplementary figural superposition which narrates the unreadability of the prior narration" (205). We are caught between "allegorical narratives" which "tell the story of the failure to read" and "tropological narratives" which "tell the story of the failure to denominate" (205). What de Man shows us in each of his chapters on Rousseau is how the same aporia occurs regardless of the concept or the figure involved. Though at various times it is "judgment," "will" or "freedom" which is being considered, the result is always the same: the concept "operates deconstructively as a principle of differentiation but then, because of the referentiality inherent in the linguistic model, reintegrates by an act of the mind what it had taken apart on the level of intuition" (240). The unifying principle in Rousseau's work is that it always functions in terms of this necessary confusion between literal and metaphorical.

The object of *Allegories of Reading* is thus on the one hand to provide a commentary which deals with presumed differences and problems inherent in the criticism of each of the texts under consideration, revealing a coherence in the reading, and on the other hand to demonstrate that the coherence is finally a variation on the same theme: "There can be no text without grammar: the logic of grammar generates texts only in the absence of referential meaning, but every text generates a referent that subverts the grammatical principle to which it owed its constitution" (269). In these terms, de Man's work is surely successful, and the clarity of his presentation adds to the value of the writing. His abject refusal to offer a general conclusion is curious, since the implication of the text is that the deconstructive enterprise is germaine not only to Rilke, Proust, Nietzsche and Rousseau but to all writing, and a summary of "the systematic undoing...of understanding" (301) would be most helpful. Nevertheless, the carefully wrought network of the reading works well enough on its own and provides its own justification. If it is true that all deconstructions take place in the readings themselves, one would still like to know how de Man's deconstructive itinerary differs from the work of Derrida and the other post-structuralists. *Allegories of Reading* certainly fits into this tradition, and it is also one of the better examples of such work, but the readings, while excellent in themselves, seem not to extend the principles of deconstruction very far, though they clearly put them to good use.

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Satire's Persuasive Voice by Edward A. Bloom and Lillian D. Bloom. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1979. Pp. 305. $15.00.

The authors of this book say the progress of their work "at times was as intricate and hazardous as a journey through the Minoan labyrinth." In a book whose jacket declares it to be "engagingly written," as well as both "literate and urbane," such phraseology nevertheless smacks a bit of the high-flown and pretentious. And does the blurb writer of a university press book nowadays feel the need to commend a professorial study for being "literate"? Apparently we have come to such a pass.

I start with the language of *Satire's Persuasive Voice* because it so frequently distracts and bothers me, and I start with two examples. In the first (p. 103), the authors maintain that Swift's "grimly circumscribed vision of London in *A Description of a City Shower* includes physical and spiritual degradation, moral filth and smells, the detritus of wasted lives and hopes:

> Sweepings from butchers' stalls, dung, guts, and blood,
> Drown'd puppies, stinking sprats, all drench'd in mud,
> Dead cats and turnip-tops come tumbling down the flood."

Swift certainly here specifies, as the authors claim, "the grossness of reality," but I nevertheless fail to see any "*spiritual* degradation," any "*moral* filth and smells," any so-called "detritus of wasted *lives* and *hopes*" (except possibly the lives and hopes of cats, cattle, dogs and sprats), either in these lines or in the rest of the poem (in spite of the strained efforts of critics other than the Blooms to turn Swift's poem into some kind of divine malediction on the humankind of London). What I do see is adjectival language raised to empty display, and if it is not downright wrong and misleading, it is certainly not supported by evidence or analysis. Again, take the occasion (pp. 218, 220-21) when the authors describe the use of "the beast metaphor, through which human shortcomings are placed in an animal context or are viewed by animals with a clarity denied to erring man," and where they arrive at a conclusion that to me somehow manages to be, by turns, truistic, jejune, canting:

> As is true of all satire, however, the dramatically exaggerated [beast] metaphors should not be insisted upon as the satirist's literal understanding of the world. Rather, some common objective ground exists upon which we may be able to come to terms with animal satire even as provocative as that we have just seen [in Butler, Swift, Addison]. All three ... share at least these attitudes: that communal man has failed; that his social and political institutions no longer reflect the best of which the human spirit and will are capable.

To point up the questionable rhetoric, and the occasional questionable conclusions, in this book is not to deny the intellectual vigor and breadth also exhibited in the authors' attempt to chart the currents of satire. If they have not always avoided eddies and whirlpools in the way of their so "hazardous" journey, they have nevertheless struggled to make so protean a subject as satire give up its various shapes, voices, impulses. The trouble is that satire's persuasive voice *is* so protean—fierce as fire, bland as still water, sweeter than

honey, rough as a cob, and so it is no wonder if it should seem to slip, occasionally, from the pen of anyone who would dare so sweeping a treatment as is to be found in this study. The authors do recognize the elusiveness of their subject, do try to do justice to it not only in theory, but also in theme and practice. After their introduction, and the welcome emphasis in it on what they term the essential, "innate quality," of *humanitas* in the best kinds of satire, we are given three chapters on "Intention: Satiric Mode of Feeling"; "Shape and Order: 'How a Modern Satire Should be Made'"; "Apotropaic Visions: Satiric Tone and Meaning"; then come three chapters on "Religious Satire," "Political Satire," "Satire of Manners." As perhaps can be seen from these headings, however, there is inherent in the attempt to be both general and specific a good deal of overlapping, with all the possibilities of repetitiveness thereby inherent. Some of these possibilities are realized, especially towards the end.

In spite of my frequent irritation with the diction of the book (its use, for me, of such an anachronistic patois as "integrated persons," "communal man," "self-realization and communal needs," "potential for social understanding"), my distaste for its frequent banalities ("To perform well artistically means to write well both aesthetically and intellectually, to entertain and yet to strike appropriate targets," p. 209; "Dryden's case against Achitophel, a cumulative one, impresses"—a complete sentence on p. 78; "language and style... and the tone in which they are conveyed become measures of persuasion;" "If satire is to be applicable for all times, then its occasional or historical allusions may have to be annotated for later generations," p. 112), my reservations about some of its judgments ("When... we look back at the narrator of *A Modest* Proposal, we do not see him except as a murky, disturbing presence," p. 88; "Rochester [in *A Satire against Reason and Mankind*] has a powerful theme to convey, but he fails to make it more than superficially moving, for his rhetoric overpowers rather than supports conviction," p. 56—one wonders here if this may not have been a deliberate stratagem on Rochester's part), the book is still to be recommended—mainly to graduate students and generalists rather than to experts in the field. Too much is covered that is already covered elsewhere, too many readings offered that are to be found, in more complex form, elsewhere. A charting of the currents is offered, not a sounding of the depths.

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Acts of Inclusion: Studies Bearing on an Elementary Theory of Romanticism by Michael G. Cooke. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979. Pp. xx + 289. $18.50.

Acts of Inclusion is not a book that displays great intellectual energy. It has some good passages, and many felicitously worded sentences, but its total effect is, for some reason, not compelling. I will review some of its merits and weaknesses in an attempt to identify the key deficiency.

Although I am not at ease with simple periodization,[1] I accept the fact that most scholars find "Romanticism" a useful historical term. Still, I believe that Cooke's use of the word (as in the following passage) goes beyond hypostasis, to the borders of personification. "The silences of" Wordsworth's "The Thorn," he says, "are reminiscent of the besetting silence of romanticism when it comes face to face with consequences, in the ultimate moment of recognition and responsibility" (p. 104). More conventionally naive is the assertion that the romantic period "is a veritable watershed between the medieval and the modern order" (p. 90).

But this is not the main problem with the book, and there is much richness of detail to compensate for the schematic sense of history that it reveals. There are good passages on *Antony and Cleopatra* (p. 87), on "Christabel" (p. 99), on "Ode to Autumn" (p. 117), on *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (p. 167), on *The Prelude* (p. 204), among others. A passage from *Don Juan* "has a severely cryptic quality and is full of images yearning to be heard.... it would seem that the poem gets larger, as by authorial commentary, not only to encompass a polyglot universe in a single space, but also to enunciate the wealth of implication in that universe's single objects" (p. 237). This is good writing. "We might delight in its unplotted ease, indeed we do so, until there comes home to us a sense of its unboundedness. It is hard not to pull back at the intersection of spontaneity and infinity" (p. 227). This is authoritative. "The things we describe as spontaneous, as opposed to laborious, are the things that coincide with our preferences, which after all constitute limitations as much as strengths" (p. 228). The commentary on Byron, an author with whom Cooke is, of course, very much at home, is generally strong and mature.

There are also bad elements and bad passages in the book: facile antitheses—"The principle of power yields to the power of principle" (p. 88); a spasmodic colloquialism—"sucker" used twice as a verb (p. xvii, p. 93); an embarrassingly condescending report of a classroom scene (p. 148); levels of diction so mixed as to produce rhetorical chimeras ("There is in this a quiet stroke of genius that it would be well to highlight," p. 180); generalizations with a strong family resemblance to clichés ("Perhaps the feminine is a power as impalpable, as ubiquitous, as irresistible as the wind" [p. 183]); and the occasional epigraph to a chapter, mercifully but coyly attributed to "Anon." ("Romanticism is the only major movement that has given its basic impulses and aspirations a plenary indulgence, and at the same time a stern critique. Anon." [p. 186]).

It is all the more surprising, then, to encounter a passage of such intellectual and verbal power as the following, occurring, at that, in the context of an argument on synecdoche and fragmentation that lies close to the central concerns of the book: one wonders why someone capable of such strong style should so often slip into dullness. "Shelley reintegrates Orpheus into the romantic scheme by terming language 'a *perpetual* Orphic song,' thus overcoming the piecemeal temporal effect of the root story. No, fragmentation is problematical even at the level of synecdoche.... it admits the existence of the rest, but by a coercive homogeneity denies the range and character substance

[1] The obvious reference here is to Hans Robert Jauss, *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation* (Frankfurt, 1970), pp. 144-57 et passim.

of what goes beyond it. At bottom, Blake's 'The Tyger' works as a poem about the poignant insanity of a man who truly sees nothing but parts, whose vision is a fearfully unqualified and unrelieved synecdoche, affecting alike the Creator and the Tyger" (pp. 222-23).

Fragmentation is what this book desires to avoid: through a stragetic generosity that seeks to extend each idea into a principle, or spread the resonances of each fact until they broaden into a concept, it attempts over and over again to make generality out of the particular, or at least to cast every observation into the most general form in which it can be expressed. These tendencies in his own writing Cooke attributes to the romantics, calling them "acts of inclusion." "The quest for fullness of recognition may be associated with the form of the epic, and we may turn now to Byron's use of that form as another act of inclusion" (p. 219). But the acts of inclusion are notably Cooke's own: too often, they consist in the blurring of boundaries between the specific and the general to produce pseudo-concepts. In De Quincey, "analysis of everyday becomes apocalypse, and awareness of singularity becomes a promise of catholicity" (p. 257). On the same page, "very few people have charged Charles Lamb with an apocalyptic subjectivity, but even he shows germane interests in his prose. His essay on 'The Sanity of True Genius' makes him a spokesman for such subjectivity, as he turns what society might see as eccentric lines of personality into the most fundamental pattern of human potentiality. In this light, we might also see in the 'Dissertation on Roast Pig' a light-hearted instance of the romantic taste for new developments or new revelation."

Another typical sentence, at the end of a long section on romantic criminality: "The romantic period, whatever sort of social action it purveys, is orientated toward consequences rather than punishment" (p. 103). Cooke seems to think that you accomplish something simply by moving the lens back to focus on a larger area so that you no longer have to account for the things that fall in the smaller area; that a wide word ("consequences") will automatically explain what a narrow one ("punishment") did not. But the new categories would have to be more compelling rather than merely more inclusive to make them interesting, to give us a different grip on the subject. What vitiates a book that contains much good writing is, I have said, a tendency to read a feature of the author's own style, an "inclusiveness" that is too often only approximation, into its subject-matter: but an approach to thinking that itself lacks form cannot provide a satisfactory model for organization in the material to which it is applied.

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Sexuality and Feminism in Shelley by Nathaniel Brown. Cambridge, Mass. and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1979. Pp. 298. $17.50.

The first half of this book provides a competent, well-written summary of Shelley's concept of "civilized sex"; the second half insists that this concept is feminist. It is not. Hence the title of the book is a misnomer and Nathaniel Brown's argument is specious.

Brown begins with a careful description of Shelley's *Discourse on Love*, rightly emphasizing its centrality to Shelley's theories of love, sexuality and the status of women. He details Shelley's hostility to homosexuality, libertinism, and prostitution and his celebration of a liberated sexuality for both men and women that involves the intellectual and emotional as well as the physical self. Brown correctly insists that Shelley frequently uses explicitly sexual imagery in his poetry to mark the moments of climactic union between loving minds and bodies. That Shelley's obsessive imagery of rising, trembling, panting, sinking, falling, expiring is sexual will surprise no one familiar with the criticism of Shelley's poetry published in the last two decades. However, Brown does extend this material in one interesting way. He argues that Shelley saw Greek love culminating not in the homosexuality he abhorred but rather in an intensely emotional "spontaneous orgasm." He further suggests that such orgasms occur at the climaxes (pun intended) of "Indian Serenade," "Epipsychidion," and "Ode to the West Wind." While no one would doubt that the imagery of these poems derives from sexual experiences, and particularly from wet dreams, it seems odd that Brown never suggests or explores their most likely source: the adolescent male fantasies accompanying masturbation. That masturbation lies behind such episodes is supported by the accounts that Brown himself included concerning the wide-spread sexual activity at Eton when Shelley was there, including "onanism, mutual masturbation and ... orgies of naked boys in bed together" (142). Nonetheless, it is possible that the intense, sensitive and eroticised adolescent Shelley experienced spontaneous orgasm on occasion and made this experience an emblem of the most purified sexuality that he later associated with Greek love and Platonic eros.

Brown's claim that Shelley was a feminist rests on his advocacy of androgyny. Shelley believed that women should be given the same liberal education and sexual freedom as men. A woman should become, in the terms Shelley develops in *On Love*, the "antitype," the perfect correspondent to the ideal "prototype" that a man projects of his future perfected self. Brown argues ardently that such sympathetic identification between the sexes leads to a condition of androgyny, the highest feminist ideal of total equality between the sexes. But we need to look more critically at exactly what androgyny means for Shelley. As his own term "antitype" implies, androgyny is for Shelley a projection of the male self into a female form. The male prototype appropriates female characteristics to become the antitype. Such an appropriation is pure narcissism, a process of male ego-gratification that has little to do with a genuine respect for women as independent human beings.

That Shelley's androgynous ideal is essentially male is seen most clearly in *The Revolt of Islam*, a work that Brown incredibly calls "the most powerful feminist poem in the language and ... the most thoroughly grounded in the realities of the woman question" (181). Brown bases this assertion on the fact that in this poem the female protagonist Cynthna leads a political revolt that succeeds briefly in overwhelming the tyrant and initiating a time of universal peace and love. But Brown ignores the fact that the ideal Cynthna serves is embodied in the poem as exclusively male. Laon is the Serpent/Morning Star, a radiant form beside which, at the end of the first Canto, Cynthna remains but a cloaked "sha-

dow." And Cynthna consistently portrays herself as totally dependent on Laon: she is his pupil, she sings *his* songs (l. 1040), she feels she must prove her "worth" to him (l. 506), her powers derive entirely from his ideas and rhetoric. As the "female mind" (l. 973), she cannot create her own utopian visions; instead, her role is to inspire his revolutionary zeal and to be absolutely loyal to his ideals (significantly, her visions are born from sleep, from her "unconscious" mind, while his are consciously and deliberately created). Shelley's "feminism" extends only to the rhetorical question: "Can man be free if woman be a slave?" (l. 1045). He envisions a world where women are educated and sexually liberated, but only for the purpose of becoming more satisfying intellectual, emotional and sexual companions for men; he does not grant them autonomy or the capacity to lead without male guidance. In dedicating this poem to Mary Godwin Shelley as his "companion," Shelley directly invoked her mother's argument in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* that rational women would make better companions for men. For Mary Wollstonecraft, such rhetoric was necessary to win the sympathetic attention of a male audience. In the mouth of a man, the affirmation of a woman's social role as "companion" to a man has patriarchal overtones.

It is critical to see that Cynthna can lead a revolution only—and literally—in the name of Laon; she is known to her followers as "Laone." And when Laon sacrifices himself that she may flee to America and start a new era of love and peace, Cynthna instead races to join Laon on his funeral pyre, choosing to die with him. Thus *The Revolt of Islam* is a male fantasy of feminism: the completely sympathetic woman is so entirely identified with the male ego that she cannot survive apart from him. That this version of androgyny is but a subtler form of male sexism has been cogently argued in "The Politics of Androgyny" by Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi and the responses to this essay published in the 1974 volume of *Women's Studies*, an influential document in the development of contemporary feminist thought which Brown does not mention.

Moreover, to call *The Revolt of Islam* a feminist utopia, as Brown does, is to misread completely that genre as it has developed from Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915) to Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976) and Sally Miller Gearhart's *The Wanderground* (1978). Authentic feminist utopias depict a world where women are free of male domination and exploitation, either because men do not live there (as in *Herland* and *The Wanderground*) or because the society is genuinely gender-free. In the utopian community of Mattapoisett depicted in *Woman on the Edge of Time*, children are born from breeders and males and females share equally in breast-feeding, parenting, work, military defense, and homosexual and heterosexual love. In contrast, Shelley's utopias present women only as soul-mates; and his affirmation of free-love, while extended to women (he encouraged Mary to have sex with Thomas Hogg), is primarily a male adolescent fantasy. Mary Wollstonecraft, for all that *A Vindication* directly inspired Shelley's concept of the woman as an educated companion, did not there advocate free love; her rationally and affectionately united men and women were monogamous.

A feminist analysis of Shelley's thought and life would have to consider several issues that Brown ignores. First, what were Shelley's concepts of child-

rearing, parenting, and the family? Shelley was vehemently opposed to birth-control and fathered at least six children before he was thirty. Beyond asserting that Shelley affirmed the "joys of parenthood" (197), Brown offers no evidence that Shelley took the responsibilities of a parent seriously. Indeed, as we know from Mary Shelley, the day after their daughter Clara died, Shelley left his grieving wife at the Hoppner's and went to discuss poetry with Byron. Secondly, how did Shelley treat the women with whom he was emotionally involved? Shelley's relationships with his first wife Harriet Westbrook (whom he abandoned when she failed to live up to his ideal antitype), with Elizabeth Hitchener (whose reputation he destroyed, whose financial ruin he caused, and whom he repeatedly insulted after they parted), and with Mary Shelley (whose "frigidity" and emotional distance from him were caused primarily by his callous disregard for her feelings toward their two dying children and his numerous mistresses)—none of these relationships shows a genuine respect for women that could be called feminist in any meaningful sense of the term. Nor does Brown explore what is perhaps the most fascinating area of Shelley's relationships with women: his powerful Oedipal ties with his beautiful mother and his intensely close adolescent bonding with his look-alike sister Elizabeth. The latter relationship in particular is a more likely psychological origin for Shelley's explicit brother-sister incest fantasies in *The Revolt of Islam* and *Prometheus Unbound* than the ideal of sympathetic identification that Brown emphasizes. Despite Brown's arguments, this book does not seriously challenge the traditional view of Shelley as an adolescent narcissist who wished to surround himself with a harem of adoring female versions of himself: intellectually and sexually liberated women, true, but women whose ultimate function was to provide constant and sympathetic stimulation for *his* faculties.

Had Nathaniel Brown entitled his book *Shelley's Attitudes to Love, Sexuality and Women*, he would have given us a useful compendium of Shelley's thought on these subjects. By trying to cast Shelley as "an ideal type of humanity, beaconing the way to the future" of androgynous unisexuality (226) and as a "welcome inspiration" to the feminist movement (180), Brown does both Shelley and the feminists a disservice. Shelley's androgyny does not transcend "patriarchal definitions of gender," as Brown claims; it only subsumes the woman more completely under the psyche of the man.

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Victorian Fantasy by Stephen Prickett. Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1979, Pp. xvi + 257. $17.50.

Victorian Fantasy "attempts to describe a variety of writers [who] tried to extend and enrich ways of perceiving 'reality' by a variety of non-realistic techniques that included nonsense, dreams, visions, and the creation of other worlds... not in opposition to the prevailing realism, but in *addition* to it" (xiii, xv). Prickett's main task, then, is one of practical criticism within an historically

defined field while his clear subsidiary task is the theoretical one of justifying his perceptions of historical boundaries and of "the prevailing realism." Although his success as practical critic is greater than his success as theoretician, the volume as a whole nonetheless offers much of value.

"The Evolution of a Word," Prickett's opening chapter, does not so much define fantasy as offer some glimpses into the way the term was used from the Romantics to the Moderns, particularly in opposition to "imagination." (Prickett is well known for his work on Coleridge and Wordsworth.) "'Imagination' and 'fantasy' had come to stand for two sides of the Victorian psyche: its sacred and profane loves... light and dark" (6, 9). Rather than proceed theoretically, Prickett suggests that "it is in fact much more rewarding to see this polarity of fantasy and imagination straightforwardly in terms of literary genre" (43) and he strives to organize the rest of his book accordingly. "Christmas at Scrooge's" primarily contrasts Thomas Hood's *Miss Kilmansegg and her Precious Leg* with Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, the first (which is only arguably a fantasy) being presented as social satire while the second is presented as psychological exploration. "Dreams and Nightmares" concerns presumably unrepressed fantasies, both the non-sexual and the sexual. Although Beardsley's *Under the Hill* is obviously sexual, Prickett is clearly mistaken in asserting that Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is "[without] brooding metaphysical evil and sexual corruption" (97) ("'I will be with you on your wedding night,'" the monster swears); perhaps it is Prickett's failure to see Mary Shelley's repressed sexuality that induced him to place *Frankenstein* in this chapter. The following chapter, "Consensus and Nonsense," contrasts the "emotion, nostalgia and sheer buffoonery [of Lear's nonsense with the] undeviating rationality [Carroll] pushed to its furthest and wildest extremes" (131). While this oversimplifies (Prickett himself brilliantly shows Lear's etymological accuracy while Carroll's hidden obsession with death and sexuality is well known), the dichotomy is instructive. "Adults in Allegory Land" contrasts the "minute detail" of Kingsley's world with the grand Platonic ideals of the worlds created by George MacDonald, Prickett's defensible pick as all-time champion fantasist. Finally "Worlds within Worlds" discusses the fantasies of Kipling and Nesbit, the former capitalizing on his childhood imaginings, the latter bringing out her adult insights, and both writing ostensibly for children because "the mystery and urgency of other worlds [had been] dissipated... by the conventions of Victorian naturalism" (235). Although somewhat organized to foster theoretical inquiry, this is clearly a volume of historical scholarship.

One of the great virtues of *Victorian Fantasy* as literary history is that it does not confine itself to literature. There is some of the usual discussion of architecture at Walpole's and Beckford's places and some unusual discussion of the way the mid-century discovery of dinosaurs transformed the prevailing images of monstrosity. The authors who are treated at length almost all generate suggestive parallel treatments of the works of their illustrators. But there are weaknesses of historical scholarship from time to time. Although Prickett recognizes that "so many of the nineteenth-century fantasies... draw heavily and in some detail on *The Arabian Nights*" (217), he ignores that collection and the whole vogue of Oriental tale (like Addison's 1711 "Our Ideas of

Time") and instead asserts that "*Suddenly* [emphasis mine] fairy stories had become respectable" (5). Although Gershon Legman's magisterial *The Limerick* reports that verse form as early as the fourteenth century (Legman, p. xiv), Prickett puts the "earliest examples" in 1820 (122). The book, in short, needs to be read with care.

There is much in *Victorian Fantasy* to repay careful reading. Like Roger Sale's *Fairy Tales and After*, Prickett's volume offers serious and often insightful criticism of works usually ignored and almost always, when mentioned, slighted. If one looks for theoretical definitions or historical exhaustiveness, this book disappoints by its omission of significant treatment of matters that ought to fall under its title concept, the prose of William Morris for example, Medievalism, Scott's novels, the vogue for vampirism, *Peter Pan*, and the science fiction of Doyle and Wells. But there is much here that is unexpected. As part of his detailed discussion of *A Christmas Carol*, Prickett observes that "money as power is a central theme of Victorian fiction" (57) and that "the will to dominate rather than money *per se* is thus the key to Scrooge's character" (58). Contrary to the popular impression that Scrooge undergoes a fundamental conversion, Prickett is shockingly right in observing that

> Scrooge's character is not transformed. He retains all his old desire to shock, startle, and dominate: the purchase of the turkey on Christmas morning ('the one as big as the man'), the surprise visit to his nephew, and the raising of Bob Crachit's wages all have the authentic drama of the old Scrooge. What has been transformed is his feeling of identity with mankind: his realization that what he has lost and needs most is love. (60-61)

Time and again Prickett turns out an insight not in opposition to the usual wisdom but in *addition* to it. In giving serious readings to Lear's limericks and dwelling on the meanings of monsters, in distinguishing boldly the exuberant fantasies from the self-destroying ones, in reviewing major authors and viewing minor ones, Prickett does a service. He overstates, for example, when he claims that "Nonsense constituted an entire alternative aesthetic, making possible a radically different kind of art" (146), but he is right to force our attention on the sense of Nonsense and right to argue that without understanding Fantasy we cannot understand the Victorians.

ERIC S. RABKIN

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Lyric Time: Dickinson and the Limits of Genre by Sharon Cameron. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979. Pp. x + 280. $15.00.

The poetry of Emily Dickinson has been subjected to critical scrutiny from many different angles. First seen as a literary curiosity admired for its quaintness and its differences from that of her contemporaries, her poetry has been taken up by a variety of apologists and interpreters, from those who tried to make her a precursor of the Imagists, to the New Critics, who delighted in her ambiguities

and paradoxes, to the Freudians, who found hidden longings and hatreds, to the Existentialists, who found *angst*, to the biographical critics, who found a record of her family relationships. The cumulative effect of over a half century of criticism has been generally good, however, as we have come to recognize Dickinson for the major poet she is. Recent criticism has been less at pains to explain or apologize for her poetry and more concerned with penetrating its structures. Among those recent critics who have skillfully dealt with the work as a whole while at the same time giving close readings of individual poems are David Porter and Robert Weisbuch. Weisbuch, for example, in *Emily Dickinson's Poetry* (1975) has examined Dickinson's use of typology to suggest the various and multiple patterns of meaning in the poems.

Sharon Cameron has built upon (and gracefully acknowledged) this previous criticism, adding to it the insights yielded by a deft and brilliant application of phenomenological criticism, particularly the writings of Derrida, Lacan, and Wittgenstein, to suggest that Dickinson is a phenomenalist poet, "who argues the connection between presence, its loss, and the restorative powers of language." Actually, Cameron is interested not only in Dickinson, with whose work she is thoroughly familiar; she is a theoretician as well as a practical critic, and *Lyric Time* asks to be read simultaneously as three different books: (1) as a study of Dickinson's poems themselves, using close readings and generalizing about the poet's various techniques and strategies; (2) as an application of phenomenalist critical theory to Dickinson's work, and an attempt to develop and refine that body of theory; and (3) as an attempt to develop a theory of the lyric poem, using examples from the English seventeenth century, the Romantic period, and modern poetry, as well as the poetry of Dickinson. She manages to carry off this balancing act and end up with a challenging book about temporality in Dickinson's work that leads outward to an exploration of similar questions concerning the lyric genre. Chapter Five, in fact, is concerned mainly with these questions, and is actually a prolegomenon to a future study.

One of Cameron's strengths is her ability to read a controversial and difficult poem closely and to weave that reading into her larger argument. One of the best examples of this is her reading of "My Life had stood—a Loaded Gun." She regards two of the generally accepted readings as inadequate: one interprets the speaker as God's marksman who guards Him at night; the other makes the "Master" the speaker's lover, whom she guards with jealous fury, seemingly preferring violence to sexuality. But because the last stanza is so puzzling and contradictory Cameron argues that the poem cannot make sense either as religious allegory or as the depiction of an erotic relationship. What she detects in the poem is a dialectic of rage, suggested by the last stanza, which expresses a conflict between "identity," conceived of as violence, and a conception of life as rage. This enigmatic stanza scrutinizes the speaker's own fury, and views the speaker-gun as the agent of death rather than the object of it. The discussion of this poem lies at the center of the second chapter, subtitled "The Dialectic of Rage," which examines a group of Dickinson poems that seek a way out of time and the conflicts within time: essentially sexuality and death. Into these poems a disruptive voice enters, attempting to prevent the convergence of these two forces by manifesting itself in the form of rage.

In this type of poem rage becomes presence, a means of escape from temporality. Escape from temporality is the governing idea of the book, and, of course, of Dickinson's poetry as well. Her desire to depart from the temporal order into "Immortality" has been frequently noticed, and Cameron sees this dialectic between time and immortality working in a number of different ways, including the poets of grief and loss. She goes further and provides speculations on this tendency in more conventional lyric poets, from Marvell in the seventeenth century through Blake, Keats, Yeats, and others. The loss of a world outside of time is a loss that Dickinson in an intense and striking way attempts to recover, and Cameron sees this as an abiding impulse in the lyric genre.

Her subtly developed arguments are shaped and informed throughout by a critical sensibility attuned to Derrida and Wallace Stevens; many of her happier turns of phrase contain Stevensian echoes or cadences. The book is not for the casual reader; it builds carefully on the explorations of Dickinson's inner structures done recently by Weisbuch and Porter, but it takes some interesting—and justifiable—risks in speculating and offering hypotheses about the nature and function of the lyric seen as a struggle with time.

DONALD BARLOW STAUFFER

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The Achievement of Margaret Fuller by Margaret Vanderhaar Allen. University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979. Pp. 225. $13.50.

The Transcendentalist belief in "life as art," a dangerous concept derived from Goethe's "self-culture," often dispersed the energies of fine minds like Bronson Alcott, Jones Very and (I would add, Allen would not) Margaret Fuller. Cultivating a complex personality's many facets works against achieving excellence in any one field, unless one possesses the genius of a Goethe. Allen believes Fuller did achieve multiple excellence as a social reformer, political thinker, essayist, creative writer, feminist, critic and conversationalist. While these last two claims have some validity, the others are excessive. To say Fuller "ranks with the best writers of her age as an epigrammatist" is, considering "her age" included Dickinson, Emerson and Thoreau, to succumb to the enthusiasm of an advocate.

But, despite occasional hyperbole, Allen has produced one of the most solid interpretations of Fuller's thought. Allen has read all the pertinent material, condensed it admirably, and presented the most relevant in a highly readable style. The focus on Fuller's relationship to Emerson and Goethe is sharp, and the discussion of Fuller's aesthetic use of the garden motif, of her contribution as a critic, and of her views on nature and civilization is scholarly and succinct. In addition to being a dependable overview of Fuller's achievement, Allen's *Achievement* also offers original insights, the chief being her startling and persuasive argument that Fuller was a precursor of Walt Whitman as well as of Susan B. Anthony. Most of all, Allen has reached her main goal, the principal

aim of the half-dozen Fuller studies published this past decade—to dispel the distorting mists that swirled up around Fuller after her death in 1850, a fog of misinterpretation that her *Memoirs*, edited by Channing, Emerson and Clarke, contributed much to create.

This is necessary work. Both the plaster cast and the Gothic image must be smashed before an accurate reconstruction of the truths of Fuller's life and mind can take place. The methodology by which these truths are to be revealed will have to be that of sophisticated feminism because, for all her limitations, Fuller will continue to be an intriguing personality not only for what she accomplished but because of the age in which she flourished, an era when college doors were closed to women and when Blackstone classed women with minors and idiots before the law. Allen and other recent critics have now corrected the vision of the past; they have prepared the way for the next phase of Fuller criticism which will answer even more fundamental questions and make specific contributions to the history and theory of woman's education, the definition of feminine psychology, and the clearer understanding of cultural paradigms.

One example should suffice. Everyone mentions how Fuller's father, Timothy, a strict disciplinarian, forced a course of study upon Fuller to make her a paragon of intellectual erudition, a regimen that Fuller blamed for her frequent headaches, fainting spells and sleepwalking. Some fault Timothy for his harshness, but Allen points out that Fuller would not have become Fuller without this education.

Recent criticism has determined the facts of this anecdote; the next wave of Fuller criticism will be able to interpret such questions as: if feminists like Allen are correct in stating that women think differently from men, then what sort of education should Fuller have had, and how should it have been conducted? Had she followed the same course of study, but under her mother's tutelage as Fuller's heroine Madame De Staël had, would that have spared her physical and psychological torment? Would reading Virgil late at night with her mother instead of with her father have prevented those sexual nightmares about wild horses trampling her? To what extent is her later obsession with cold male figures like Emerson, Goethe, and John Nathan explained by her close but cold relationship with her father? Is her marriage to the sweet-tempered, self-effacing Ossoli a reverse mirror image of her parents' marriage? Indeed, since Fuller's frequent illnesses parallel her mother's behavior, was Fuller following a role model of womanhood or perhaps manifesting a secret sympathy with her mother (*Sarah* Margaret Fuller did drop her first name, thus sharing the same name with her mother)? Lastly, how abnormal were Fuller's illnesses set against the norm of her times, a standard of female illness that has been recorded in literature from Austen to Wharton and developed thematically in Grand Opera? These are topics which the next phase of Fuller criticism will investigate, and that exciting next phase of feminist criticism has been made possible through the efforts of critics like Allen.

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The Poetic Achievement of Ezra Pound by Michael Alexander. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979. Pp. 247. $14.95.

Until this book appeared, there was no adequate, up-to-date critical introduction to the poetic oeuvre of Ezra Pound. The works of Hugh Kenner (1951), G. S. Fraser (1960), and M. L. Rosenthal (1960) served well in their day, but could say little or nothing about the post-Pisan *Cantos*. Among the more recent introductory essays, the pamphlets of William Van O'Connor (1963), Marion Montgomery (1970), and Jeannette Lander (1971) are nugatory; the books of Christine Brooke-Rose (1971), Sister Bernetta Quinn (1972), and Donald Davie (1975) are, respectively, too precious, too inaccurate, and too advanced to be useful to beginning students; and Peter Brooker's *A Student's Guide to the Selected Poems of Ezra Pound* (1979), though an accurate and intelligent reference companion, does not provide the broad discussion of issues and attitudes without which many readers find it difficult to orient themselves to Pound's poetry. Michael Alexander aims, in *The Poetic Achievement of Ezra Pound*, "to present, in a manageable volume, an introductory critical survey of Pound's verse as a whole, including the translations" (p. 13). Alexander has fulfilled this aim superbly. His book is now the best available general introduction to the poet and his fascinating but sometimes inaccessible work. Alexander's ABC may be confidently recommended to any reader who seeks initiation into the Ezratic mysteries.

The 247-page format gives Alexander more elbow-room than was enjoyed by the authors of most of the books named above. Alexander is able to digress, recapitulate, crack a joke, or spend thirteen pages on an early poem if the discussion requires it. Instead of one pinched chapter on *The Cantos*, he has the disposition of five, or more than a hundred pages. As a result, Alexander's introduction seems less hurried and more judicious than most. The reader does not feel bustled along by a guide who is glancing at his watch and worrying about lunch.

Alexander addresses himself primarily to "an uninitiated British reader," one to whom Pound may seem not only difficult but unutterably foreign (p. 14). To orient such a reader, Alexander compares Pound frequently to the classic authors at the heart of the British school and university curriculum: Shakespeare, Donne, Jonson, Herrick, Marvell, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Wordsworth, Keats, Swinburne, Hopkins, Yeats. American readers, unaccustomed to thinking of Pound in such a context, will find these comparisons novel and challenging. Yet nothing in Alexander's exposition will strike a literate but uninitiated American student as inaccessible or incomprehensible. Alexander has an excellent grasp of American history and culture, and a fine ear for American speech. His perspective and his style are, in the best sense, transatlantic, to resurrect a term that Pound's generation found useful.

Alexander has lived long and intimately with his subject. His knowledge of Pound's work is familiar yet clear-eyed, affectionate yet accurate. By no means an uncritical idolater of the Master, Alexander concedes some of the most damaging charges made against Pound's work by unsympathetic critics. But Alexander has an unshakeable conviction of Pound's poetic merits, which

he elucidates with eloquence, warmth, and wit. In other words, he maintains critical balance without losing enthusiasm, no mean feat in the tipsy world of Pound studies.

The unity of Pound's work, for Alexander, is post-romantic in nature, a unity of the poet's temperament and responsiveness to emotional experience. Alexander ascribes Pound's disjunctive techniques, for example, not to the self-conscious intellectual program of modernist aesthetics, but to something more fundamental in Pound's very make-up: "Pound's obliquity, though it has to do with his dislike for obvious conceptualization, is the semi-dramatic strategy natural to a sensibility inwardly in awe of life, and the product of a temperament possessed of deep instincts, though normally reticent in their expression. The mysteriousness and refinement in Pound is not an affectation, in spite of his striking of attitudes; it is rather that his inner life was not for direct export" (p. 43). This is a more generous (and British) diagnosis of Pound's odd habits of mind than is Herbert Schneidau's suggestion, in *Paideuma* for Spring 1976, that the poet wrote out of something very close to an aphasic mental disorder.

Alexander speaks with special sympathy and insight about Pound's translations. On this subject, the critic has particular authority, since he himself has translated much Old English poetry, including the Penguin *Beowulf*. Pound's *Seafarer* has obviously been an inspiration to Alexander, who devotes thirteen excellent pages to it, concluding that it is "the most powerful realization of Old English poetry we are ever likely to have" (p. 78). Elsewhere in his book Alexander writes perceptively about *Cathay*, *Homage to Sextus Propertius*, *The Confucian Odes*, and *The Women of Trachis*.

Alexander chooses not to discuss Pound's prose writings, lest such discussion blur his focus on the poetry. This decision is justifiable, but leads to the book's only major omission: that of a concise summary and evaluation of Pound's economic and political beliefs. That Alexander is capable of such a summary seems clear; his passing references to economic and political subjects in *The Cantos* are informed and accurate, and he provides elsewhere in the book an excellent synopsis of Pound's religious philosophy. But he does not offer a comparable account of Pound's social philosophy, some explanation of which is badly needed by most uninitiated readers.

Nevertheless, *The Poetic Achievement of Ezra Pound* is itself no small critical achievement. Because it will be of great use to future students of the poet's work, this book ought to be put into a paperback edition as soon as possible.

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The Moment of "Scrutiny" by Francis Mulhern. London: New Left Books, 1979. Pp. 331. $24.00.

F. R. Leavis' most influential critical work originally appeared in *Scrutiny*, the quarterly he edited. This journal was also, as Francis Mulhern writes in his new book, the organizer and bearer of an important "ideological formation."

Leavis' was only one voice among many, although the most brilliant. Mulhern's book brings us the whole chorus: D. W. Harding, Wilfrid Mellers, L. C. Knights, G. H. Bantock, and others.

Mulhern's concern is not chiefly with Leavis but rather with Leavisism as a force within twentieth century English culture. Its influence persists but Mulhern limits his account to the lifespan of *Scrutiny* (1932-53). He has performed a kind of political-cultural autopsy not so much to honor *Scrutiny* as to make clear its "material specificity." The purpose of such a critique can only be to liberate present-day literary and social thought.

The author's solicitude for the present informs his historical critique at every turn. He is a Marxist and an editor of the London-based quarterly, *New Left Review*. Like others associated with that journal, notably Perry Anderson and Terry Eagleton, Mulhern sees Leavisism, despite its anti-Marxism, as more important for present-day Marxists than the simplicities of explicitly Marxist criticism of the English 1930s.

The Moment of "Scrutiny" has three major sections, sandwiched by an introduction on the Cambridge intellectual milieu in which the journal was conceived and a restrospect at the end. The first of these sections, and to my mind the best, takes up *Scrutiny* in the bold, brave days if its youth, up to 1939. The second part considers the journal's program for educational reform during the war years. Mulhern writes well, in this section, about the political-cultural meaning of Leavis' turning in the 1940s from poetry to criticism of the novel. The third section deals with the post-war period (1945-53), during which *Scrutiny*'s very success was the condition of its dissolution.

The first part defines the sense of cultural crisis which *Scrutiny*'s contributors shared. In reaction, Mulhern writes, "the journal elaborated a binary discourse that united a technicist conception of 'civilization' (the domain of quantities and means) with a complementarily idealist conception of 'culture' (the domain of qualities, values and ends). The 'community' so affirmed was a spiritual entity, incarnated not in social structures but in 'tradition.'" In this formulation *Scrutiny*'s key words—"culture," "community," "tradition"—are brought together and illuminated by the conjunction.

From this analysis follows Mulhern's conclusion, which is his book's main point: "the principal effect of this discourse, manifest equally in its utterances and its practical policy, was a categorial dissolution of politics." The purpose of *The Moment of "Scrutiny"* is to lift that repression, to make politics once more possible.

Mulhern places *Scrutiny* in the context of twentieth century European social thought, most notably in relation to classical sociology and to the romantic interest in national culture (*Volksgeist*). Previously, especially in the writing of Raymond Williams, Leavisism has been presented exclusively in English terms, as a twentieth century continuation of the "organicist" critical tradition of Burke, Coleridge, Arnold, and T. S. Eliot. I don't think Mulhern is persuasive in locating Leavisism on the map of European modernism, but he does reveal in his attempt the openness of the new Marxist criticism in English to Continental influence.

This influence is evident in Mulhern's attempt, as he says, to "elucidate the workings of (*Scrutiny*'s) discourse." As in recent French theories of the text,

Mulhern sees ideological struggle in terms of a clash of discourses, or discursive practices. The discourse as such is more important than the individual critic-hero Leavis who gives it expression.

The most important difference between the Marxism of Raymond Williams and Arnold Kettle and that of the young English Althusserians has been the latter's philosophical and theoretical rigor. This presents a problem in the ideological critique of Leavisism, which was so militantly anti-theoretical. The problem was canvassed in a famous exchange in 1937 between René Wellek and Leavis on the relation between literary criticism and philosophy. Wellek wrote at that time: "I could wish that you had stated your assumptions more explicitly and defended them systematically." In reply Leavis reaffirmed his idea of criticism as involving acts of "realization" which have nothing to do with explicit norms or theoretical systems. The argument was dropped, and Mulhern now resumes it.

In what seems to me the most original part of his study Mulhern argues that Leavis' anti-theoreticism is itself in the service of a theory, of an ideology which conceals its premises for strategic reasons. *Scrutiny*'s god-terms, words like "concreteness" and "particularity," were not "the *names* of self-evident data of perception" but rather were "*terms* in a discourse... whose logical substructures were in principle no less 'systematic' or 'abstract' than those of Marxism or (I. A. Richards') hermeneutics."

What then were the assumptions of *Scrutiny*'s discursive practice? One was that "the critic could and should achieve unmediated community with his text, and with his presumed audience, the 'readers of poetry as such.'" The question of the critic's relation to his audience leads back to social-political issues. That of the critic's "unmediated community with his text" is more directly literary.

Mulhern observes that Leavisian criticism does not depend upon definition, as does, say, that of Yvor Winters. Instead, Leavis' typical gesture was "recognition—recognition, and where appropriate, affirmation of what is immanent in the concrete literary word." Criticism, on this view, does not *produce* meaning. Rather, "to criticize was to bear witness to meanings that were already adequately constituted in the words on the page, needing only to be 'realized' in the consciousness of the reader."

It follows that for Leavis criticism was "a form of intuitionism: specifically, it consisted in *the intuition of moral values in literary experience*." This intuitionism in turn implies other assumptions, as for example about the homogeneity of the audience, which is necessarily a select few, a veritable Coleridgean clerisy. *Scrutiny*'s elitism leads out again to politics. The argument is knotty and sometimes elliptical, and I wish Mulhern had allowed himself more space to spell it out in the crucial chapter entitled "Standards, Currencies and Values." I wish, too, that Mulhern had been more clear about the connection between Leavis' horror of cultural disorder and his idealist metaphysics. These objections, however, are minor. This is a book to be grateful for and to make one regret the lack of a comparable study of the two American literary-critical groups which were contemporaneous with *Scrutiny*: the New Critics and the New York intellectuals.

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Theodore Roethke: An American Romantic by Jay Parini. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1979. Pp. xi + 208. $12.50.

Theodore Roethke schooled his spirit in the marsh and mire, in "the Void, immediate and terrifying." He is our great poet of the regressive imagination moving back through "the kingdom of bang and blab" into the "kingdom of stinks and sighs." Roethke's goal was to recover the first primordial world of the psyche, to think his body into the vegetal country of greenhouse and far field, to root himself "in a deep deep yes. In all." Ultimately he went back because he wanted to go forward, remaking himself in the process. Thus he descends into the underworld in a poem like "Root Cellar" ("What a congress of stinks!") in order to reach the tenuous sunlight realm of "Child on Top of a Greenhouse" ("And everyone, everyone pointing up and shouting!"). Roethke's subject is rebirth and metamorphosis, the snake shedding its skin, the man struggling to regain, in Yeats's phrase, "radical innocence." He could say playfully that "I've crawled from the mire, alert as a saint or a dog." And it is because he was always coming back into the light that Roethke considered himself one of the poets of affirmation. As he said, "None the less, in spite of all the muck and welter, the dark, the *dreck* of these poems, I count myself among the happy poets." Roethke is a poet of Blakean exuberance and his *Collected Poems* document the achieved transformation of obsession into joy.

Jay Parini's book on Roethke as an American Romantic adds to our understanding of Roethke's poetry and thus represents a solid addition to the critical literature. Parini's study offers what he calls "a map of Theodore Roethke's secret planet." He tracks Roethke's poetic development from *Open House* (1941) to *The Far Field* (1964), detailing individual lyrics and sequences in order to isolate major patterns and thus discover the poet's "mythos." Parini's essential contribution is his reading of Roethke's work as an extension of the literature of American Romanticism. He considers Roethke not merely in terms of his debt to Yeats (and it seems to me that both Roethke and his commentators have overacknowledged his borrowings from "the last Romantic"), but also as a late descendant of Emerson and Whitman. For Roethke is finally a poet of the egotistical sublime, celebrating and moralizing the American landscape, reading nature as "a steady storm of correspondences," a symbol of the spirit. Roethke called Reason "that dreary shed, that hutch for grubby schoolboys," and Parini interprets his plunge into the unconscious as an internalized quest romance. This enables him to consider Roethke's necessary pilgrimage in traditional Romantic terms.

Parini is at his best in defining the constellation of images, ideas, and influences animating Roethke's major sequences. (His book is weakest when it tries to fit some of the poems into mechanistic, so called "mythic" terms derived from Joseph Campbell. Must our critics continue to rely on grand, supposedly universal, obsolete anthropological models?) Parini's irrefutable argument is that the fact and symbol of his family's greenhouse stands at the center of Roethke's mature work. The greenhouse was for him at one and the same time a natural and an artificial world, a place of order and chaos, generation and decay. He called it "a reality harsher than reality," both

"heaven and hell, a kind of tropics created in the savage climate of Michigan...." The great moment in Roethke's poetic life is the transition between his first and second books, the way in which he worked out of the strict aesthetic straitjacket of *Open House* into the organic flowering of *The Lost Son and Other Poems* (1948). The greenhouse is at the heart of the breakthrough. It first of all gave Roethke an ostensible subject and rooted his work in what he called "an anguish of concreteness." He would go on to become, in John Berryman's lovely phrase, "the Garden Master," and indeed no poet has more acutely surveyed the natural growth and degeneration of roots, weeds, moss, carnations, and orchids. The greenhouse is also linked to two other discoveries Roethke was making at the same time. Through the promptings of Kenneth Burke he began to explore the poetic possibilities of the unconscious, returning to the world of his childhood and thus commencing "the retrogressive course" of his "hallucinatory dream." At the same time he realized that the organic process of plants could stand as a metaphor and model for the poetic enterprise itself, each poem taking on its own intrinsic shape. Thus in formal and expressive terms Roethke became a Romantic poet.

Theodore Roethke: An American Romantic does not extend or redefine current notions of Romanticism, but it does place Roethke firmly in a Romantic tradition. As such it is a sturdy contribution to the study of Roethke's poetry. The Garden Master is himself gone, but this book helps to demonstrate why his work stands not on the peripheries but at the center of our literature.

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